

Make Swimming FUN

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It may be hard to imagine during a grueling practice, but swimming can be fun.

Sports psychologist Dr. Jenny Susser, of the Hospital for Special Surgery, in Manhattan, offers advice on how to keep the joy in your passion while working toward your goals. One of the things that can take away from the fun of a sport is when you lose balance in your life, Susser says. Grab all the parents and head out to Chuck E. Cheese's once a month. "We would go bowling and the next three days we were teasing each other about how silly we looked". Susser said. In terms of making swimming or any sport fun, Susser likes to talk motivators. External motivation could be a scholarship or impressing a boyfriend or girlfriend, or doing it for your parents. "An internal motivator would be, "I want to be the best I can be", Susser said. "Plenty of girls I swam with college were only swimming for their scholarships, and they hated it. For me, it was a great motivator, but it was not what got me out of bed at 5:00 in the morning". The team aspect can also make a difference, Susser says. "What we used to do at UCLA is have joke day every Friday afternoon after warm-ups. Or we would have competitions where sprinters would go up against the distance swimmers. Create something that makes your workout different and more fun and challenging, and it gives you something to look forward to. It can break up workouts. Even little things can help. "Swimmers can also create a theme for each meet. "It takes a little bit of the humdrum and repetition out of it", Susser said. "You have to think outside the box. I don't think it matters the level of the team. We were consistently a top 10 team, and we were known as one of the 'funnest' teams around". Finally, Susser says, "it helps to remember you'll always have good days and bad days.